

WORKING TOGETHER

By DOROTHY HACKING AND NELL GREEN, O.B.E.

IT HAS NOT BEEN the general custom in South Africa for people of different races to mix socially, but before the Nationalists came to power there were many organisations in which people of all races worked together; these included universities, welfare bodies, political parties, discussion groups, conferences and churches. There was growing enthusiasm for helping each other and learning to understand each other. No doubt in the normal course of events, with the rise in the economic and educational standards of our non-European population, this co-operation and understanding would have increased in a perfectly natural way and probably have led to social mixing, wherever inclination and opportunity demanded it.

Since 1948 however the party in power has been dedicated to the implementation of apartheid and for nearly 20 years legislation has been deliberately aimed at destroying all contact between the races except through Government officials. As one contact after another has been blocked off, those South Africans prepared to make the effort to meet and work with their fellow citizens of different races have lost heart or been intimidated until it is almost true to say that Europeans and non-Europeans never meet except on a master-servant or employer-employee relationship. It is almost true, but not quite, for there are still people and organisations energetically working for racial understanding and co-operation and we believe the time has come for all people of goodwill to join in this important activity.

We list some of the organisations and groups involved in working together and would be interested to hear about others of whose existence we are ignorant.

The Institute of Race Relations, which has branches in most of the larger towns in South Africa and whose head office is in Johannesburg (Box 97) does magnificent work in collecting and correlating facts and statistics about all South Africans, helps educational projects and, as it has a multi-racial membership offers the opportunities for meeting fellow citizens in the course of interesting discussions, symposia and community service. Membership fees are R4.20 per annum for full members and R1 for associate members, and many publications are available on current topics.

The Black Sash, open to women only, runs Advice Offices in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban where voluntary helpers are given a chance to come face to face with the overwhelming difficulties non-Europeans meet in urban areas as a result of influx control laws. Anyone who has seen at close quarters the heart-break and frustration caused by the implementation of this policy of apartheid must agree that this cannot be allowed to go on. Occasionally the sympathetic advice and help solve some problem and the reward of seeing a family re-united and settled is worth much time and trouble. On a more lighthearted level the Johannesburg Black Sash runs a Saturday Club which meets once a month in a private house for discussion and occasionally for a party and here a pleasant relaxed atmosphere has developed where women can get to know each other. Membership fees of the Black Sash are R2 per annum and anyone wanting to join should contact the Black Sash office in her area.

The English Academy throughout South Africa is devoted to the ideal of increasing the use of and the quality of the English language whether this be in white schools or non-white schools, among Afrikaans speakers or English speakers. Here is a tremendous field where individuals working for a common ideal can meet naturally and easily and get to know each other. Details about membership may be got from English Academy of Southern Africa, Ballater House, corner of Stiemens and Melle Streets, Braamfontein, Johannesburg.

There are still organisations which work for and with non-white South Africans in the fields of nutrition and the distribution of food. **Kupugani** (Johannesburg office 407 Locarno House) which has branches throughout the country and **African School Feeding Scheme** (410 Management House, Stiemens Street, Braamfontein) deal with this aspect of co-operation. **African Self Help Association**, 212 Transvalia Building, Braamfontein, works in the field of general community development. You can offer help, not only financial help, but time and energy to promoting the aims of these organisations.

In the student world the **National Union of South African Students** has an open membership and has branches at all the English language universities as well as in Pretoria and Stellenbosch and is affiliated to some of the multi-racial Correspondence colleges.

The Works Camp Association operates holiday community development projects (address c/o P. Saffery, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg).

And, of course, there is no law whatsoever which stops you from inviting people of any colour to your home provided you do not offer an African guest an alcoholic drink there. If, there-

fore, in the course of your work you meet people whom you would like to get to know better there is no legal bar to your asking anyone to your home.

Opportunity within the Church

But potentially the most fruitful field in South Africa for constructive work across the colour line is within the Christian Church and it is here that there is an urgent need for more people who are ready to work along Christian lines for racial harmony and understanding. It is obvious that one does not join a church because it presents an opportunity to do certain work — the tides of conviction need to run much deeper than that, but there must be many people, some perhaps within the Black Sash, who are drawn to the Christian Church or who are already members of it but who have not realised its potential as a force for racial co-operation. This is not to say that other religions are remote from or are unconcerned with the ethical questions posed by our racial problems, but in multi-racial South Africa 94 per cent of the white, 91 per cent of the coloured, 7 per cent of the Asian and 67 per cent of the African population professes to be Christian, making a total of 72 per cent of the whole population, and what the Christian Church preaches and practises in the face of the attempted implementation of apartheid is therefore particularly important.

What do Christian Churches say about Apartheid? The three Dutch Reformed Churches and the Apostolic Church within South Africa conform with the ideology of apartheid and preach and practise segregation but the rest of the Christian Community, the Methodist, the Anglican, the Roman Catholic, the Presbyterian, the Lutheran, the Baptist and the Congregational Churches backed by their foundation churches overseas, are outspoken in their condemnation of an ideology which divides mankind according to the colour of its skin and which legislates accordingly.

Here are some of their more recent pronouncements on Race Relations:

METHODIST CONFERENCE 1960

"This Conference declares its conviction that it is the will of God for the Methodist Church that it should be one and undivided, trusting to the leading of God to bring this ideal to ultimate fruition. It believes that an increase, not a decrease, in the multi-racial co-operation is God's will and that throughout the organisations of the Church inter-racial contact should be promoted as freely as possible." In 1962, the Conference confirmed its previous resolutions to encourage consultation between leaders in all fields of thought and activity and in all racial groups, and to give its full and hearty support to any multi-racial Conference which might be called for the purpose of such consultations. In 1963, the Conference elected an African, the Rev. Seth Mokitimi, as President.

ANGLICAN 1955, Provincial Synod.

"That the Provincial Synod affirm its convictions that only on a Christian basis can the solution to the problems of our Multi-racial society be found in which due regard will be paid to the rightful aspirations of all individuals and racial groups."

In 1963 — After Anglican Bishops had made a statement condemning policies which deny fundamental rights to a Non-White Citizen and after the Bishop of Johannesburg had been warned to remember what had happened to Bishop Reeves, his predecessor the following statement at the Synod of Bishops was issued.

"In these circumstances, it seems necessary to the Bishops of the Church of the Province of South Africa now meeting in Synod in Bloemfontein, to reaffirm their unanimity in proclaiming their conviction that the Church must openly and fearlessly condemn all that it believes to be evil and false in the social, political or economic life of any nation and, whenever the claims of obedience to the State and God are in conflict, it is to God that our obedience must be given."

ROMAN CATHOLIC.

Bishops' Pastoral letters 1962.

"Since we are people of divided racial and national origins, it seems inevitable that human weakness will express itself in colour prejudice and in national misunderstandings. The fact of human frailty should not however, constitute an insurmountable barrier to the building up of mutual trust and co-operation, if we remain faithful to the moral principles which are the foundation of Christian tradition where Justice joins hands with Charity."

"As Christian people we dare not remain silent and impassive in the face of the injustices inflicted on members of the underprivileged racial groups. Colour must never be permitted to offer an excuse or a pretext for injustice. We must use every lawful means suggested by our Christian conscience in order to counteract and overcome injustices pressing down on underprivileged groups through the toleration of a starvation level of wages, of job reservation, of the evils which flow from compulsory migratory labour, particularly when the people who belong to these groups are denied the elementary right to organise in defence of their legitimate interests."

"Let there be no doubt among us that it is a Christian duty to use every lawful means to bring about a more equitable and harmonious relationship between all the different groups of people who together form our Southern African society."

LUTHERANS: The General Principle of the Church (excerpt).

"The Church is the Body of Christ and, as such, God's Kingdom of Grace on Earth. As

Christians we are all members of the same Body of Christ. Any form of segregation and all forms of discrimination based on race, colour or ethnic origin are contrary to the Will of God and to the Gospel."

PRESBYTERIAN: 1962.

Resolutions passed by the Assembly.

The Assembly 1; Strongly urges Ministers and Servers to increase and strengthen multi-racial contacts, not only for the purposes of worship, but also for discussion, mutual understanding and joint service.

The Assembly 2; instructs Presbyteries to organise ministerial retreats and conferences for office-bearers and youth on a multi-racial basis.

CONGREGATIONAL:

The Congregational Union has consistently condemned all legislation which discriminates on grounds of colour and in 1962 the Assembly stated:—

"The Congregational Union of South Africa believes that all law-abiding inhabitants of a country have the inalienable right to the freedom of association and domicile within its borders."

BAPTIST: 1960.

Executive of the Baptist Union and the South African Baptist Missionary Society expressed its convictions as follows:—

1. That every man is equally precious to God regardless of colour, race or cultural background.
2. That it is the obligation of all Christians to live together in love, and that fellowship in the Church knows no barriers, for all are one in Christ Jesus.
3. That it is possible for the various groups in one country to live together in harmony.
4. That law and order are the basis of a progressive society and that all laws should be equally administered. Lawlessness and violence undermine the structure of human society and are contrary to the teachings of Christ.
5. That all race groups should be adequately represented in the governing of the country in which they live."

The Christian Church in South Africa apart from the Dutch Reformed Church speaks out clearly and in theory presents a united front against apartheid, but to what extent does it put into practice what it preaches? We all know that the practice is disappointing for, as a Leader of the Anglican Church readily acknowledges, there is a great gulf between profession and practice in the matters of race relations in his Church and the leaders of other Churches would acknowledge that this applied to their churches as well.

Nobody can deny that the Christian Church has failed to establish a true Christian fellowship

between its different race groups. However, the challenge that Apartheid presents to Christian teaching has produced its own reaction in the strong statements from the Churches and in the inspiring examples set by the Rev. C. F. Beyers Naude, Professor Geyser and other prominent members of the Dutch Reformed Church who have sacrificed their careers for their beliefs. For those who want to further the work of racial reconciliation there is no lack of inspiration and plenty of opportunity can be found within the Christian Institute, the Christian Council and more specifically within Church organisations, where halls provide suitable meeting places, Church interests in the townships unite workers across the colour line, and where the Churches can be used to make inter-racial worship a reality.

The Christian Church is in a unique position to shape the future of multi-racial South Africa if it can measure up to the challenge. But the Church is the Christian Community. It is 72 per cent of the total population, just as much conditioned by fear and racial prejudice in spite of its professions, as any other part of our society. The responsibility for action rests on the individual Christian. If enough Churchmen (and only a small proportion of that 72 per cent is necessary) can shake themselves out of their apathy, respond to their real leaders and set about closing that lamentable gap between Christian profession and Christian practice, then the work of racial reconciliation can go forward in this country in spite of the formidable obstacles in its way.

Acknowledgement to: "The Churches and Race Relations in South Africa" by Lesley Cawood, for quotations and statistics.

Solution to Crossword

Across: 1. Broke; 6. Wrap; 8. Chiaroscuro; 12. Chasm; 13. Ashpit; 14. Aha; 15. Vlei; 17. Porous; 19. Anchor; 23. Praline; 25. Areas; 26. Recital; 27. India; 29. T.V.; 30. E.g. Baa; 31. On; 32. Eagre; 34. Lip line; 37. Sorry; 38. S.A.R. emit; 39. Symbol; 42. Dosage; 43. Rail; 44. The; 45. Honest; 48. Ashet; 50. U.N.O. directed; 52. Sane; 53. Sexes.

Down: 1. Biscuit; 2. Ram; 3. Or; 4. Koala; 5. Essentials; 6. W.R.I.; 7. Rot; 8. Characters; 9. Ha; 10. Chic; 11. Up; 12. Chore; 14. Appraisal; 16. Its the tee; 18. Olivary; 20. Had; 21. Orioles; 22. Reanimated; 24. Edged oasis; 28. Naiad; 33. Gym; 35. Proust's; 36. Night; 40. Bred; 41. Litre; 45. Hun; 46. One; 47. No; 48. Ace; 49. H.E.; 51. Ex.